

Interview with Stan Mitchell, Chairman of Global FM, January 2007

Please tell us more about Global FM?

Global FM or to give it its full title 'The Global Facility Management Association', was born in June 2006. It is a registered International not for profit Organisation headquartered in Brussels Belgium.

It has a full time secretariat and a Board of Directors which consists of a Chairman plus 8 Regional Directors. The Board of Directors are volunteers and the secretariat is an outsourced association management company.

Tell us how the idea came about and how did you manage to establish it?

Global FM was born out of a realization that should Facilities Management wish to become a professional discipline and recognized as such there was a need to establish standards across all aspects of what we do that could be recognized across borders.

Following a collaborative agreement ('Partners in FM Excellence') between the three largest facilities management associations at the time (BIFM, FMAA and IFMA) to collaborate and share information and knowledge considerable benefit was gained by those involved. This success brought about the idea to create something similar but on a global platform. We considered that it would be not only beneficial to all involved but would be 'business critical' in facilities management achieving recognition as a strategic, tactical and operational discipline.

It was established through the efforts of the initial 'Partners in FM Excellence' who spent over 2 years establishing a governance structure that would ensure an inclusive approach i.e. the original founding associations only wish to lead the initiative in its early years, the governance structure that has been established will enable others to fully participate in a transparent fashion as the association develops and grows. It was also established that the association was to be focused upon national member-centric facilities management associations therefore ensuring that its core agenda and focus will always be towards the development of the profession and the individuals who wish to make their career in it.

There are many National, European and International Associations and now there's a Global one, what do you think will attract members to Global FM?

Global FM is unique, there is no other organization that is truly global and whose core focus and intent is towards the practicing facilities management professional.

Associations who represent these individuals now have a network and platform to engage with outside their own country where they will directly benefit from the knowledge that exists within other countries as well as have the opportunity to escalate their own particular issues and interests to an International audience as opposed to just a National one.

If such associations are serious about their core intent, assuming that it is to further the knowledge and professionalism of those practicing facilities management in their country, then there is an overwhelming case for them to join Global FM.

It is important to note that our structure accommodates all types of membership in that any organization associated with the facilities management profession or market place can, and will be encouraged to, join and fully participate in Global FM. In fact our business model will rely upon the full participation of the wider community assisted with facilities management in order to sponsor and support the tangible work that we will be undertaking on behalf of the community at large.

Global FM was formed to evaluate the level of FM on a Global scale, how do you plan on accomplishing it?

Global FM was actually established to leverage the knowledge and work that has already been done through some of the existing and mature associations that already exists. But importantly it also exists to encourage and assist some of the fledgling associations to emerge and contribute to the learning process that we will all benefit. Because an association has existed for a number of years or boasts a large membership does not ensure that it has all the knowledge and ideas that will make a valid contribution to the development of the profession. We will all be the richer for the International perspectives in all that we do and diversity of those perspectives coming from around the world.

Please tell us more about your International Workshops?

Upon embarking to establish and deliver some real benefits to the national association member who practices at the coal face, we tasked ourselves to add some value and enhance the work that was already going on in some of our member associations. We therefore established the International Workshops as a forum to identify create and engage with the International FM Community.

It is worth noting that we consider that the International FM Community includes all those who are engaged in whatever capacity with the facilities management profession and service delivery.

The workshops have been held to establish what the priorities are; gather a diverse opinion in terms of representation from Education, Research, FM Service Industry, Commerce, Corporates of all types and of course the Associations themselves.

Through this process a prioritized list of 'Hot Topics' was created and these will form the basis of the Global FM projects that have been initiated in order to deliver the value from our collaborative efforts.

Through your International Workshops you have determined 6 'hot topics', please tell us more about them?

First of all I would comment that that the six 'hot topics' were narrowed down from about 22 that were identified during the workshop evaluation process and whilst some of the headings are understandably not a surprise, the intent and perspective of our projects do bring a different approach i.e. one that has not been addressed elsewhere to our knowledge.

Each 'Hot Topic' will develop in its own right through further collaborative discussion which is taking place at further International Workshops and elsewhere with the associations but in broad terms they are described as follows:

1. Sustainability - sustainable communities, business case (model) for sustainability, lifecycle sustainability
2. Innovation – encourage Facilities Management action from continuous improvement, step change or strategic change of direction
3. Education and Training - compare and contrast current member Facilities Management qualifications; develop an International set of core competencies
4. Risk Management - develop International glossary of Facilities Management terms and best practice guidelines
5. Facilities Management now and in the future – coordinate a greater understanding and access to developments across the world
6. Economy and Cultures Across Borders – understand and develop tactics to address the issues and effects of the application of Global standards within diverse cultural environments; consider and contrast both in-house and globally and/ or regionally outsourced service provision

The Sustainability Project was launched in New Orleans in October 2006 and the Education and Training Workshop is being launched in Oxford in March 2008. Plans are currently underway to hold further development workshops in Australia in May and France in June.

Corporate sponsors who have an interest in the development of these topics as well as the profession and industry itself are being identified to fully participate in all of our projects not just in terms of funding support but in a meaningful way with full participation.

What projects are you planning to undertake in line with your 'hot topics'?

As stated above the only one that has already been launched to date is the Sustainability Project. The focus and structure of this project is as outlined below which is an abbreviation of the formal Global FM project profile:

## **1. Introduction**

*The fundamental purpose of any organization is to promote and generate sustained superior performance for the benefit of its shareholders/stakeholders/consumers.*

*In recent times, it has become imperative that this focus on improving organizational performance does not seriously impact the environment within which the organization operates as well as the wider community. Organizations must operate with a focus on global sustainability.*

### **Impact on Organizational Strategy:**

*To achieve corporate goals, organizations must consume resources and discharge production waste - be that solid or air-borne/atmospheric discharge. This production process, whether for the goods or services, must consider any impacts on sustainability of the biosphere.*

### **Content**

*Global FM considers sustainability in facilities management to be a key element of the business management framework. It is incumbent on facilities management practitioners that they rate*

*sustainability as a necessary and universal management function and in so doing assist in ensuring that positive outcomes accrue for shareholders, stakeholders and consumers alike.*

*Actions taken today will have consequences for, amongst other things:*

- *Pollution levels, including carbon emissions.*
- *The depletion of natural resources.*
- *Social well-being.*
- *The impact on biodiversity.*
- *Water usage.*
- *Energy efficiency*

*Research has shown that there is a growing trend for companies to claim they have good sustainable practices but be unable to demonstrate this as there is no standard reporting framework. Reasons for this trend include competition, risk management, innovation, emerging markets, and value of reputation and increasing incidence of mandatory reporting. However the lack of a globally understood definition for sustainable development limits the ability to measure impacts reliably and consistently for comparative purposes. This is particularly difficult if impacts many years in the future are to be considered. The range of incentives or penalties to support sustainability outcomes also needs to be considered, including regulatory or financial elements.*

*Global FM views sustainability as an essential component of good facilities management and business practice.*

## **2. Project Purpose**

*The purpose of this proposed project is to demonstrate and quantify the contribution that the facility manager and the facilities management industry can make in terms of sustainability to the existing built environment. The importance of this contribution is highlighted as communities around the world are becoming increasingly aware of the environmental impact of existing building stock.*

*Such contribution has been documented by several of Global FM's existing members. One of Global FM's founding members, The Facility Management Association of Australia, has, through the development of The Australian Federal Government's Action Agenda for Managing the Built Environment, identified significant opportunities for the facilities management industry to:*

- *develop a stronger market presence based on the industry's role in managing the built environment;*
- *helps clients benefit from the adoption of more sustainable business practices;*
- *demonstrates to the community, the property sector and investors the value that facilities management can add to social and economic well being; and,*
- *Influence the form that new standards take when translated into the operational requirements of new or refurbished buildings.*

*The Board of Global FM has recognised that knowledge, competency and indeed the definition of sustainability are different across the current and potential membership base. This has the very real potential of diluting the value contribution that the profession and industry as a whole, can make in terms of sustainability. It may also constrain industry growth.*

## **3. Global FM Sustainability Workshop**

Through sustainability workshop held in New Orleans in October 2007, current Global FM members and invited industry participants concluded that the following impediments will constrain the positive contribution that the facilities management industry can make:

- the lack of an agreed definition for sustainability as it applies to existing building stock;
- the lack of an agreed understanding of the concepts of sustainability and a perception by many that it represents a cost rather than an opportunity;
- the lack of a globally accepted metric and rating system for measuring sustainability in existing building stock;
- difficulties in allocating responsibility for implementing measures required to produce a sustainable building;
- communication failures between the various parties involved in the design, refurbishment, and facility management of a building regarding cost effective ways to realise sustainability;
- the inadequacy of current measures to demonstrate the value that can be gained from sustainability initiatives because these are often only produced over the longer term;
- considerable knowledge and skills gaps in the delivery of sustainable outcomes; and,
- transforming an existing building into a sustainable high performance facility.

#### **4. Deliverables**

As part of its vision, Global FM has quantified 3 stages of project deliverables as part of a 3 year business plan. Each Stage is sequentially dependant on outcomes from the previous stage and will be validated at subsequent Global FM sustainability workshops and by Global FM Board. Proposed deliverables for each stage of the plan are outlined below:

##### **Stage 1: Deliverables (Oct 2008)**

1. The definition and acknowledgement of the facilities management profession in the sustainability agenda.
2. Data that promotes the role of facilities management in responding to increased demand for corporate accountability associated with sustainability performance.
3. Data that promotes the role of the facilities management industry in key industry and government forums addressing sustainability.
4. Development of a business case model that highlights the costs and benefits of embracing sustainable practices in the use and management of materials, energy, water, waste and indoor air quality, with a particular focus on productivity.
5. Development of a communications plan to reflect all of the above.

##### **Stage 2: Deliverables (Oct 2009)**

1. Development of a "Sustainability Good Practice Guide".
2. Development of a "Sustainability Tool Kit (Brand Name?) for Facility Managers".
3. A centralised web-based knowledge portal for the facilities management community throughout the building lifecycle, highlighting existing tools and awareness in a way that is understandable and accessible to all levels of the industry.
4. "Global FM Sustainability Award" announced at World Workplace and promoted and showcased at Global FM member conferences and publications throughout the following 12 month period

### **Stage 3: Deliverables (Oct 2010)**

1. *Launch of Global FM Sustainability Index Benchmarks*
2. *Sustainability FM Expo and Conference*

### **Conclusion**

*The role of the facilities management industry in the sustainability agenda is significant. Quantifying this contribution and developing leading edge tools and guides to manage the many aspects in the life cycle of buildings more effectively will benefit greatly the environment, community, industry and Governments in both the short and long term.*

You were Chairman of BIFM, what was the most interesting or exciting thing you did?

The most interesting thing was the different requirements in leading a membership based organization which was essentially managed by volunteers. My experience prior to taking on that role was in managing Key Facilities Management, which as a relatively small facilities management organization (it had a similar turnover to BIFM), had a completely different dynamics to it than leading a voluntary group of well meaning individuals. The other difference was that the then Council (Board) of the BIFM consisted of some 28 individuals, not a number that makes for decisive decision making!

Whilst I had been involved in the BIFM and its predecessors since the 1980's, and was the founding Chairman of the Scottish Region, it was a completely different challenge when I became the National Chairman. Suddenly I realized that the future of the BIFM, which is the biggest National Facilities Management Association in the world, was in my hands which is an onerous position to be in.

In terms of excitement there were several things that I did that were not just exciting but incredibly challenging as well. When I took over the Institute was growing rapidly and I realised that the structure that had been adequate for what was a fledgling organization for the past 10 years was no longer appropriate for the size of organization we were becoming.

My first objective was to create a more business like structure. We undertook a complete review of the governance structure which resulted in a new Board of Directors being formed totalling 16; A new Members Council established into which all the Regional, Sector Forums and Specialist Interest Group Chairmen would be members; and finally we established those Sector Forums and Specialist Interest Groups to represent the operational interests of the membership and compliment the Regional representation that they had had since our establishment.

The next challenge was to try and encourage a more 'joined up' organization that ensured the people who were employed to deliver our strategy were engaged in the decision making process. We achieved this through the inclusion of our employed Directors in our head office being appointed Directors of the Board of the BIFM itself. We also created a number of forums where the management team at large from our head office were more engaged with the various committees operating across the organization.

The final thing that I did and the one that I consider is likely to have the most enduring impact upon what we are all trying to do in creating a recognized professional discipline called facilities management, was to establish the 'Partners in FM Excellence' with the then President of IFMA Sheila Sheridan and the Chair of FMA Australia Steve Gladwin. These agreements not only broke down some of the then barriers in our respective organization collaborating with each other but they laid the foundation for what is today Global

FM. I truly believe that if I, as one of many, have any legacy to leave in terms of the development of facilities management as a strategic professional discipline, then it will be through the work that I along with others have made to the establishment of Global FM. It will be for others to take the initiative forward but I will be happy, as I am with the results of the initiatives I led during my time as Chairman of BIFM, if Global FM eventually goes on to realize that potential that it offers to enhance what we all do within the facilities management community.

**Stan Mitchell**  
**Chairman Global FM**  
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